CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies News

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From the Dean's Desk

Thesis Supervision
A right, privilege, or duty?

One of the most challenging and difficult forms of teaching is the supervision of theses. Which professors should be involved in this activity?

At one extreme, the supervision of theses can be regarded as an integral part of every university professor's existence and is therefore tantamount to a duty that must be carried out as required. At the other end of the scale, it can be thought of as a rare privilege that must be earned through scholarship, dedication, and professional success.

From the students' perspective, the most unsatisfactory point of view has undoubtedly proven to be the attitude that like all other teaching assignments, the supervision of theses is the right of every professor. Students are often left stranded without supervisors and have to change their research orientation, department, or even university because of the lack of a formal commitment by professors to this activity and the absence of a system of recognition and reward for thesis supervision. It is therefore inevitable that in a growing number of universities a selection process has begun to evolve which defines some of the necessary qualities which a thesis supervisor should have and the benefits that should accrue from this work.

Any attempt to define the qualities desirable in a thesis supervisor leads to the obvious conclusion that these qualities are not shared by all professors. We have all heard numerous anecdotes about world-famous scholars whose total effort in the supervision of a thesis consisted in reading the final version of a thesis after it had been submitted for examination. Brilliant and independently minded students often benefit from such loose arrangements because notwithstanding the reality of the situation, they are, for life, considered as "having worked under" a renowned professor. For most graduate students, however, this type of supervision could be and often is disastrous. Hence the belief has emerged that the supervision of theses is neither a right nor a duty, but a privilege that is earned.

The selection process for eligible thesis supervisors in a university is often referred to as "accreditation". The process establishes within the university a grouping of professors that can be thought of as the "graduate faculty", regardless of whether the term faculty refers simply to a collection of professors or to a formal structure to which accredited professors belong. The requirements for accreditation are usually: scholarship, measured in terms of the quantity and quality of publications, exhibitions, performances; the level of individual research funding; and, the rate of success achieved in seeing thesis projects through to the end. Accreditation is usually for a limited time, ranging from one to several years, renewable after review by a committee of peers.

Accreditation has many advantages for the members of the graduate faculty and for graduate students alike. The advantages of an accreditation process to students are clear: the commitment of thesis supervisors to their profession is documented and the link between students and supervisors has a contractual component. In this setting it is less likely that students find themselves stranded without a supervisor since the pool of available professors is known from the beginning. Also known are the options for change of a supervisor if the need should arise. From the professors' perspective, accreditation formalizes

part of their workload and gives the Dean of Graduate Studies direct input into questions of merit, promotions, and other aspects of personal advancement. In an undefined environment, the dedication, time, and energy spent on thesis supervision frequently goes unnoticed.

The success of an accreditation system in any university ultimately depends on the open access that exists for all interested faculty members to the graduate faculty, and on the institutional pride and the collective sense of responsibility to graduate students that prevails within a university.

M. E. Smith

Graduate Programs in the Department of Psychology

Hyperbole isn't necessary in describing the strengths of the master's and doctoral programs in psychology at Concordia University – the facts speak for themselves:

- To begin with, the Quebec government funds two centres of research within the department. These centres are established at various universities by the Ministry of Education in recognition of excellence in research, and it is considered quite an accomplishment to receive funding for one such centre, let alone two. They are the Centre for Research in Human Development and the Centre for Studies in Behavioural Neurobiology.
- The department's Clinical program has the rare distinction of being recognized by both the Canadian Psychological Association and the American Psychological Association, which enables graduates of the program to practice in both the United States and Canada.
- The department has its own training clinic, where graduate students are supported by faculty who provide counselling for a variety of problems to the public at large.
- The quality of research is such that for three years running, the department has received more than $1.5 million in research grants from the provincial and federal governments.
- As well, the international respect accorded to original research work carried out by the department often results in it being published and the faculty being called upon by the media as resource persons on topical issues.

Because of these strengths, graduate programs in Psychology at Concordia are very much in demand: 100 students applied for the six positions available at the master's level this year, according to Dr. Donna White, director of the master's program in (Applied) Psychology. There is an enrolment of about 90 graduate students at all levels at any one time. An average of 10 to 15 new students are accepted annually.

While other departments might run relatively separate and independant master's and doctoral programs, it is generally assumed that MA students in the Psychology department will go on to take the Ph.D., Dr. White says.

While other universities tend to offer entirely separate programs in Clinical and Experimental Psychology, there is less of a division between the two at Concordia, she adds.

The department's two master's programs – in Applied (Clinical) and General-Experimental psychology – are research intensive, as is its one Ph.D. program.

Upon applying to the department, a student must state his/her area of research interest. Acceptance is based, in part, upon whether that area of interest matches areas of research being pursued by faculty members in the department. It is generally not difficult to do this as the department's research topics currently fit into eight broad categories, namely: Appetitive Motivation and Drug Dependence, Behaviour Disorders, Behaviour Modification, Human Development and Developmental Processes, Human Information Processing, Health Psychology, Sensory Deficits, and Sexual and Sex-Related Behaviour.

Once it has been established that a student's interests fit within the department's research goals, the student is assigned to an academic supervisor. Quite often, this system results in teams of students working in one professor's laboratory, on projects related to that professor's area of research.

Although not all faculty members are involved in the research centres, the studies carried out at the centres generally fall within the eight categories of research that define the scope of the department's endeavours. The relationship between lifestyles and aging deficits is a main topic of research at the Centre for Research in Human Development, while at the Centre for Studies in Behavioural Neurobiology the relationship between chemical mechanisms in the brain and drug addiction is a main area concentration.

Studies at the master's level involve one year of course work and research in both the Applied and Experimental programs. Students following the Applied (Clinical) program are required to complete an additional year of studies from a block of courses the department describes as its Clinical Profile. This year of study involves course work, participation in the training clinic, and a four-month internship to be com-

pleted at a local mental health institution. Some students, however, choose to complete their clinical studies at the doctoral level.

Dr. Norman Segalowicz, Director of the department's Ph.D. program, says doctoral level studies are comprised largely of research work in the Clinical Profile. This, of course, involves work at the training clinic, where therapy rooms equipped with two-way mirrors allow professors to monitor students as they counsel clients. The doctoral degree also involves a one-year internship at a local mental health institution.

"The philosophy of our programs," says Dr. Segalowicz, "is that students should become equipped to solve a problem. The theoretical and research issues involved are intended to point to practical applications."

Aside from funds available to faculty for research work, students are eligible for several teaching assistant positions available annually.

Those interested in graduate-level programs in Psychology at Concordia can call the department at (514) **848-2222**, or write to the Secretary, Graduate Programs, Department of Psychology, ER100-1, Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montreal, Quebec, H3G 1M8.

The Master's Program In Art History

As surprising as it may seem, considering this country's strong desire to establish its own cultural identity, the Master's program in Art History at Concordia University is the only program of its kind in Canada to focus exclusively on Canadian Art History.

A departmental document describes the program as "an arena for in-depth study of Canadian art, a professional program directed towards the education and training of specialists concerned with the practice of art and historical research in the visual arts and architecture." It goes on to say that "while there are many universities in Canada which offer a few graduate seminars in Canadian Art History, Concordia remains the sole institution whose program is completely dedicated to the subject."

While there may be those who sniff disdainfully at the mere mention of Canadian art, Dr. Ellen James, the director of the program, argues that "Canadian art is a new field and we are in the enviable position of looking at work that hasn't been explored before. Art History at Concordia is a very exciting subject and is full of life."

She explains that while other areas of Art History, such as the works of the European masters, have been explored from almost every possible angle, there is a substantial amount of documentation concerning Canadian art that has yet to be discovered or investigated.

"This is a rich field," she says, "It can be mined for years. Students here aren't rehashing work that has been done before. And because of this, there is no need to go abroad to try and discover, say, some hidden Leonardo Da Vinci manuscript."

At Concordia libraries and other libraries and archives around the city, she goes on to explain, there is a treasure trove of primary sources waiting to be explored by Art Historians. As a result, "Everyone in the program is making an original contribution to scholarship in the field." New research by faculty and students is frequently picked up for publication in scholarly journals.

The M.A. in Art History is a 45-credit, two-year program which requires students to produce an original research thesis that must deal with Canadian Art History. Dr. James says, that this can cover a very broad spectrum of media, including: photography, the decorative arts, architecture, sculpture, painting and drawing, design and graphic arts.

Graduate Seminar in Art History

Approximately half the students' time is occupied by course work which includes: seminars, field trips, and other participatory methods of learning. The remaining time is occupied by work on the research thesis.

Research of primary documents may involve, the examination of letters, diaries, sketchbooks, and even account books of artists. "It's a lot like detective work," Dr. James says, in explaining that a close inspection of such documents may uncover something about the artists or the period in which they worked that has been obscured by the passage of time.

As well, students benefit in that they become better prepared to interpret original sources, which is an area of expertise that is usually only acquired at the doctoral level.

Montreal-area libraries and archives are rich with resource materials, Dr. James says. They include the Public Archives of Canada, the Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec, the Musée d'Art Contemporain, the Musée des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, the McGill University Archives and other facilities at the University of Montreal.

These resource areas are supported by Concordia's libraries, where textbooks, periodicals, and an extensive slide collection are available. Since 1981, the slide collection has grown by 60 percent, to its current level of more than 14,000 slides. As well, the Department of Art History has established a collection of 6,500 photographs of Canadian works of art.

Career prospects are good, and many graduates of the program go on to become curators in galleries and museums, teachers at CEGEPs, colleges and universities, or art historians and critics.

"The presence of graduates of this program itself generates new opportunities within the community," the department states. "Indeed, in many of the above areas there is more than simply a need, but already a pressing demand for trained personnel."

Enrolment now stands at a total of 45 full-time and part-time students. Courses are given in the afternoon and early evening to accommodate both groups. About 60 percent of all applicants are accepted into the program. The majority come from Quebec, although there are now four students from Ontario and one from Manitoba in the program.

Faculty members' areas of specialization cover a wide range of topics – from industrial archeology to 19th century architecture – as do students' research topics, with such thesis titles as, **Artists of the C.P. Railroad** and **Inuit Sea Goddess**. Generally, students' research topics match with faculty members' areas of research.

One additional advantage about studying at Concordia is that as a departmental document states, "this program is housed within the Faculty of Fine Arts which offers graduate programs in Art Education and Studio Arts, and permits students to combine these two fields whenever relevant to their professional goals."

Those interested can call the Department of Art History at: (514) **848-4700**, or write to the department at: 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, VA-430, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8.

Correction Notice: Re: March Issue GSN's

The M.A. and Ph.D. programs in Educational Technology are only two of the programs offered within the Department of Education.

Graduate Profile: Nancy J. Church, Ph.D.

Nancy Church received her doctoral degree in October 1986 from the Department of Marketing. Her thesis was entitled: **A Computer Protocol of Consumers in a Simulated Search/Purchase Task: Sequential Patterns of Prepurchase Information-Seeking for a Durable Good.**

Dr. Church is a wife, mother, and teaches at the State University of New York – School of Business and Economics in Plattsburgh N.Y. As well as attending to all these important activities she is a member of several professional associations, gives seminars, and is involved in marketing consulting. She has also written several marketing-related books and has owned her own small vending machine and wholesale stationary businesses.

Dr. Nancy Church was recently honoured by the Champlain Valley Chapter of the Business and Professional Women's Organization as their 1987 Woman of the Year.

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